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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000585

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FOR WHA ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHANNON FROM AMBASSADOR
ALSO FOR WHA/CAR
WHA/EX PASS USOAS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR HIGH LEVEL MISSION TO HAITI:
APRIL 24-25

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason
1.5(b)(d).

¶1. (SBU) We are very much looking forward to your trip here tomorrow as the U.S. representative in the High Level Mission to Haiti. The players are beginning to line up: in addition to the OAS Secretary General, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and the European Union will be sending officials. I also understand Spanish FM Moratinos will be here at the same time and may attend some of the meetings. As of right now, the schedule calls for the High Level Mission to meet with President Preval, the Executive Boards of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies and representatives of the private sector and political parties. We are currently circulating a draft communique here for the Mission to consider, but don't recommend a full blown press conference at this time; some of the countries are concerned that the Mission will get bogged down in public discussions of what has or has not been pledged thus far and dilute the broader political message. This visit is not, nor should it be seen as, a pledging trip, but rather a symbolic message of support and friendship.

¶2. (C) You will find the political environment here unchanged from last week: in a word, tenuous. It is highly unlikely that a new PM will be named before your arrival. Indeed, reports now circulating seem to indicate that Preval will hold off naming any one in the near future, or perhaps put out a straw candidate that the parliament can shoot down before the two-year Senators are forced to leave their seats on May 8. Parliamentary blocs are forming and reforming, with LAA leader Youri Latorture often the only politician on the airwaves. Consultations with the political parties are ongoing, although the president has yet to meet with the private sector. In a meeting earlier today, members of the Board of the American Chamber of Commerce, traditionally strong supporters of Preval, were blunt in expressing their concern about the president's lack of vision and leadership. In the meantime, the lameduck Alexis government has found that it has, by virtue of the Haitian constitution, little leeway to manage the country's affairs and many of the ministers - and their programs - appear to have gone to ground.

¶3. (C) Preval is playing Hamlet these days. Stubbornly clinging (at least in public) to the idea that Haiti's crisis is primarily a food and cost of living crisis, rather than a political challenge, he told the visiting French Minister of Cooperation and Francophonie today that the international community is primarily to blame for the problems here, since it did not come up with assistance more rapidly. (The French Ambassador tells me Preval criticized the US by name for not producing immediately the dols 30 million he requested to

fund a rollback in rice prices.) Preval's dissatisfaction with the international community will likely be one of the leitmotifs of his meeting with the High Level Mission. I encourage you and your colleagues to fight this churlish tendency and get him to focus on what needs to be done now: getting a Prime Minister named swiftly and putting in place a results-oriented government.

¶4. (C) At the core of our message should be an expression of the international community's solidarity with the Haitian people at this time of great need. I think it is important to stress our continued commitment to assisting Haiti not only during this short term crisis but also over the longer term through broad-based development programs. The immediate problem is one of being able to pay for food, but the overarching issues of poverty and joblessness in Haiti have not gone away and we must be prepared to help it deal with them. It is equally important for us to remind Preval, parliament and the rest of the Haitian political class that a broad-based, empowered government is essential to Haiti's future and a critical complement to continued strong international engagement. The Haitian government, at all levels, must become more effective, responsive and accountable to the people. And the three branches of government, particularly the executive and legislature, must work together more collaboratively and constructively. Time is of the essence, as the events of the last two weeks have shown.

¶5. (C) We should strongly encourage Preval to reach out more, to include civil society and the institutional private sector, as well as the political parties, in his consultations. The role of the private sector, as engine of investment and growth, is particularly important. And we must

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make the point that the riots which hit Haiti hard should not be used as an excuse to deflect or divert attention away from the country's critical national agenda: security, stability and sound governance (to include a functioning electoral calendar), and a better life for the Haitian people. Those priorities have not changed.

¶6. (C) Preval, like most of us, is not big on self-criticism. He - and many of your other Haitian interlocutors - will seek to make the discussion about us, about why the international community should "fix" Haiti. Engaging him on this topic tends to be counterproductive. The international community, led by the US, has made an enormous commitment to Haiti over the past four years and there is every indication that this engagement will continue. What we should highlight, as friends and partners, is where we believe our efforts complement and reinforce the leadership and vision that he and the rest of the Haitian political class must/must bring to bear on Haiti's problems.

¶7. (C) Haitians, again like most of us, are highly suspicious of those who come here to tell them what to do. The High Level Mission's delicate challenge in the next 23 hours is to convince Preval and Haiti's political class that only through dialogue, collaboration, and a careful, reasoned reassessment of the country's priorities can the problems highlighted by the events of last week be addressed.

SANDERSON